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Recruiting Americans To Aid Qaddafi

Perhaps the most disturbing feature of the Edwin Wilson-Frank Terpil arms-dealing and terrorist-training story is the ease with which American businessmen, former CIA agents and military specialists were recruited to work for the likes of Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Dozens of American experts in the dark arts willingly went to work for the power-mad Libyan who has turned his country into a refuge and training camp for assassins, hijackers and other scum of the earth. How could they do it?

My associate Dale Van Atta has been chasing the Wilson-Terpil story for 10 months and has learned that, surprising as it seems, some Americans joined up for patriotic motives. They honestly believed they were part of a super-secret CIA operation. In fact, CIA involvement cannot be ruled out, though hard evidence is lacking.

But for most of the Wilson-Terpil gang, the motive was simple greed. One such was Jerome S. Brower of Pomona, Calif. Here's what a classified Treasury Department memorandum had to say about Brower, whom it recommended be indicted:

"[He] is licensed as a manufacturer of explosives . . . He is president of

the International Society of Explosives Engineers . . . and he has an extensive history of support and assistance to federal, state and local law enforcement. Yet, with knowledge and intent, he supplied high explosives for terrorist use at an inflated price and illegally shipped those explosives to Libya and Uganda."

Brower also supplied the experts who taught his customers how to use their deadly merchandise, the memo said. After initially lying about his involvement, Brower finally copped a plea. He was fined \$5,000 and ordered to serve four months of a five-year prison term.

In addition to the patriotic and the greedy, there were some who were used by Wilson and Terpil for the prestige they added to their operations. One of these was retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Joseph Cappucci, a decorated veteran of World War II and an acknowledged expert in counterintelligence and security. He served as head of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and as director of the Defense Investigative Service.

"Ed [Wilson] specialized in recruiting senior military officers for their contacts," explained Kevin Mulcahy, a onetime associate turned government witness. He pointed out that Wilson had dozens of companies, and "about 90 deals out of 100 were perfectly legitimate, while the others were sleazy."

After meeting Wilson, Cappucci had him checked out with some intelli-

gence contacts. Unfortunately, the word came back that Wilson was OK.

So Cappucci headquartered his private security business in a Washington townhouse owned by Wilson, used Wilson's attorney and employed at least one of Wilson's associates.

According to secret government files, Cappucci told investigators that Wilson had lent him the money to start his business.

In May, 1978, investigators for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms were told by an informant that one of Cappucci's employes was trying to obtain a large quantity of arms for export to Libya.

Cappucci denied that the man in question had ever worked for him. He denied involvement in any foreign arms shipments, and, in particular, denied the informant's claim that Cappucci himself had discussed arms for Libya with a munitions maker in Springfield, Mass.

The federal investigators could find "no . . . evidence of criminal activity by Cappucci," and finally dropped the case. They zeroed in on Wilson and eventually got the indictments against the Wilson-Terpil gang.

Cappucci says his experience with Wilson has taught him a lesson: Check out thoroughly anyone with whom he has business dealings. He said he wised up when he "started hearing incredible stories about [Wilson] — so I stayed the hell away from him."